A MONTANA MYSTERY & By SEWARD W. HOPKINS

scheming

"Ah!"

This Story Was Commenced Sunday,

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS Overtaken by a Montana blizzard, Cayright, a surveyor, seeks shelter at a friend's cottage. He finds the friend, a man named Hubbick, and his wife murdered. As he is about to go for help Hubbick's daughter Nellie arrives and charges him with the murder of her parents. The girl becomes ill. Cayright cares for her. She asks forgiveness for her terrille charge. Sheriff Gavin arrives on the scene, charges Cayright and Nellie with the murder of Hubbick and his wife and with an attempt at elopement thereafter. He attempts to scare Nellie into marrying him by threatening to arrest her for the murder, and is somewhat chagrined to learn Cayright is willing to be arrested for the murder, and is taken to the lockup by the sheriff. rtaken by a Montana blizzard, Cayright

CHAPTER VII (Continued).

He sat there when Nelson and his companions entered. A mild resentment showed in his face when the men merely spoke casually to Nellie, and then, with an air of authority and proprietorship, began their preparations to carry away the bodies of Hubbick and his wife.
But this look faded away into a half
smile when old Crooked Ears took a

seat by his side. He was not alone. There were two, then, who would shed their blood for

Nellie. "We've been sent by Sheriff Gavin, said Nelson, evidently in charge of the "Gavin didn't know just what you wanted done, but thought likely you would want them buried right in Hub-

"I suppose that is best," replied Nel-"You know what to do better than I. You have been through these scenes

something like pride. "This ain't so new to Hubbicks. But what will you do? You oughtn't to stay here alone." "But I must stay. What else is there for me to do? The place needs some

"It ain't good to be alone here," per sisted Nelson. "You" ried. There's Gavin." "You'll be gettin' mar-

Nellie turned away in disgust, and allowed them to continue without inter-

She went to the kitchen, where Jo-"Can't hurt him," said Crooked Ears

"Him dead." "I know," said Neilie. "They cannot hurt him, Joe. But they hurt me."

Joe's fists clinched. "Hurt Nellie! Hurt a friend of Alice Gordon's? What as needed to prevent this?"
"Not that way, Joe," said Nellie, un-

derstanding his feelings. "They would not harm me. But they are rude men and do not understand." "Can't hurt him," said Joe, jerking his thumb toward the front of the

"Him dead." "him" Joe meant both the bodies lying there.

Something in his tone caused Nellie o look at him sharply. "Can't hurt him," s

said Joe again. This last was emphasized, but whi

ered. The dark thumb made a quick jerk toward the direction of Hubbicks. without knowing what he meant, felt that his words were signifi-

his thumb jerking again toward per, his Hubbicks. Nellie knew instinctively that he

meant Cayright. She could not at that time enter into

a lengthy explanation of her feelings toward Cayright. In fact, she did no exactly understand them herself.

She blushed at Joe's question. That as because she understood Joe. Old Crooked Ears knew only two emo

He either liked or hated. The intensity of Joe's "liking" in any one else be love. But Nellie did equal to the task of analysis.

"Yes, Joe, I like him," she said. Old Crooked Ears nodded. "Then we do something quick," he whispered. "The little girl sent me. She says, 'Joe, go to Nellie.' That tell

She say, 'Joe, bring Nellie here.' That tell you what to do. But Joe hear something on the way." The hissing whisper warned her that the disclosure should not reach the cars of the others in the house. She quietly shut the door, and shut herself in the

kitchen with Joe. Charlie Ox started at this. Why was he shut out? But a look on her face

his intelligence. He changed his seat and grunted to his dog. As a result, the dog lay down across the doorway. Nellie was safe from interruption.

What do you mean,' Joe?" she asked "What have you heard? What are they

"You like Gavin?

"No. I do not like Gavin, Joe.

butt of his wit on more than one occa-

had killed Joe's brother, who had not must—his life depends on it—I beg him stolen the horse, a supposed theft for to do it. Will you?" which he had been hanged by Gavin's

Old Crooked Ears had come of a nu- of whom they spoke. merous family. One brother had thus worthless fellow, but a man who was in good standing in the gin mills and the circles most frequented by Gavin. She had since died, but her son, called Mose, was the keeper of the Hubbicks

"Joe no like Gavin," he said. It was good to know that Nellie

shared his sentiments. "But what did you hear?" asked Nelije, with some impatience.

"The judge, him not home," "The judge a good man." "Yes, I know that Joe."

"If him have something to do about this, that young man, him go free." "Yes, of course. Why should he not

go free, Joe? He did not kill my father and mother." assured of that, or Nellie would not like

"Him go free if the judge was home, continued Joe. "But Gavin not want him go free."

Nellie clutched at her heart. Sh knew something of the rude and swift measures adopted in these cases.

"All Gavin's friends think like Gavin, "Joe hear much when him crooked ears seem shut. Joe hear on the roads what these men say. They

"What did they say?" asked Nellie.

kill him." Another jerk toward the front kind that had not called for a talent in but friend. Me come from Nellie. Go "Him say that Judge Gordon no want to punish such a man for politics. See? Joe can't vote. But the ground was covered with snow. The "H Joe hears much around. Gavin him say snow was melting. A cat would leave me?" Judge Gordon want to get high office The young man have good friends, and they help Gordon if Gordon help him."

"Yes, yes," said Nellie, "So Gavin him say the young man be punished while Gordon him away." Nellie turned deathly white. She knew 'Sometam I tank we go down by da it was a crime that Joe was leading up road an' tak da made track. Da horses "How will they punish him, Joe?"

Joe glanced around furtively. tam. We "Tonight—when all people sleep—they no track." take him from Mose at the lockup. They pretend Gavin protect him, but Gavin

"But what will they do?" asked Nellie, almost foreseeing the answer she would "Hang him," said Joe, who knew how

to crawl toward a disclosure, but not how to soften it when it came "Hang him! Hang Mr. Cayright!" She fell back, sick and faint, against

the table. Joe stood mutely waiting. With a supreme effort, she pulled herself together.

"Joe," she said, "we must help him. Are there not men in Hubbicks we can "Not when the judge away. Gavir

him control everything." "Then, if we cannot save him by appeal to justice, we must resort to methods of our own. Joe, will you help

"That what we come for," he said. The almost distracted girl took a few steps around the kitchen. She glanced "I should say so," said Nelson, with out across the great expanse of melting "Joe," she said, halting before him, "if

Mr. Cayright could escape from the lockup, could he get away?" Joe's finger pointed to the snow-cov-

ered earth. "How?" he asked. "Where him go. Gavin go. Then Gavin have good ex-Kill him for breaking away from lockup.

"That's so," moaned the girl, wringing her hands. "Oh, God! tell me what Swiftly she thought, and, as if in re-

sponse to her heart-spoken prayer, an inspiration came to her.
"Joe," she said, putting her soft hands on his arm of iron, "could you get him out of the lockup before—before they got him out?"

"Is not Mose your relative?" "No mind Mose. Tell Joe. The eyes of the old Indian flashed as perhaps they had flashed in the old days before towns like Hubbicks had

"Joe try

ou. too.'

come upon the hunting grounds of his "Yes." he answered simply. "Then, if he cannot escape by riding away, bring him here. Or send him." "They come here and kill him-kill

"No, no, they will not. Hush! They are ready to go in there-wait." The sheep dog growled.
"Get up," said Nelson's voice.

that dog out of the way."
"Charley Ox did not move. loor opened partially, and Nellie said: "Charlie!"

A whistle took the dog away. Nelson found Joe sitting dully by the fire, and Nellie in a dejected attitude leaning on the table. "We've got them ready," said Nel-

"Is there anything you want son. "Are you not going in to Gordon's

"No," said Nellie agarn. "My place is here." "Come, boys," directed Nelson

Between them they lifted two white bound burdens and carried them to the backs of horses.

Wagons and sleds were still useless in places, impossible in some

"Come on," ordered Nelson again Then to Nellie he said: "This is a terrible crime, Miss Hubbick, murdering the richest man of these parts. The sheriff is roused. about it. We'll see that justice is done." Nellie bowed, and with stony eyes watched them ride away.

CHAPTER VIII.

When they were well down the avenue of osages, Nellie seemed to come to life. Charlies Ox had joined her and Joe, in he kitchen.

He knew that something was going on. He had no undue curiosity to pry into his young mistress' secrets. But if there was work to be done he wanted to do his share.

"Joe," said Nellie, speaking firmly and taking the generalship of the affair into her own hands, "this is what you will do. Give them time to get well on Old Crooked Ears hated Gavin with the way. At dusk you will start for an intensity possible only to natures Hubbicks, and lead my mare. You know such as his. Gavin had made him the Hubbicks better than I do. You will know where to leave Jenny. Then ge Mr. Cayright out of the lockup. Tell him to ride Jenny here. Tell him he

> Charley Ox listened with calm face. He had not seen Cayright, but he knew

Was he Nellie's friend? Then Charlie en ushered to the spirit world. A Ox was as ready as Joe to help him. But Nellie gave Charlie no instruc-tions. She made a cup of strong coffee for each. They ate supper together-Charlie, the herder, Crocked Ears, the

Indian, and the fairest girl in Montana. She was a goddess to both of them. She was fit to be a queen to any one. When dusk came Joe obeyed without further words. He knew just what

Whether he knew just what he could do ro not was not apparent. But, as he rode away on his sturdy pony, she clasped his hand, and he almost crushed her fingers with his strong but true re-

She felt there was no need of words to ask him to be faithful. Joe was always faithful.

think he had forgotten something, or she had. He stopped.
"What me say to the little girl?

To him Alice Gordon was always the litle girl. "Tell her-tell Mrs. Gordon-I have my

duty here," she said. And then Joe rode away.

The brows of Charlies Ox lifted, for she turned to him with parted lips and panting bosom. "Charlie," she said, "is there a way

to get to the dugout, without leaving tracks in the snow?" Charlie pondered some seconds over ters

fresh snow?" she asked. "Sometam I tank it," replied Charlie

tracks that would last till the drifts.

not froze hard, an' da ice brak many across the country to the camp. We walk in da creek an' leave

"Da creek run near da lill earth house. I not been in it since da snow know what to do." come.' 'Then there is not a footprint near

"But even they would tramp out the footprints. It is good, Charlie.

help me? "I will die for you. I tell nobody be trusted anytang.' "Then the first thing to do is to carry ome food there. I will get it now.'

low she knew her way, the girl went about her task. A great jug of strong coffee was pre pared. Even cold, it had good qualities. and two loaves of bread she had baked

the day before. A bottle of 9whisky was added, and with a thought of creature comforts the key." that would have brought a smile to an older conspirator, one of Mr. Hubbick's his head in the door and turned with newest pipes and a big bag of tobacco. an oath to his followers. A box of matches, and a few other

odds and ends she thought might be use ful, were also stored away. to the dugout, and take along some plankets. Make it as comfortable as

vou can. "Yas," said Charlie, as he rolled up wo thick blankets and shouldered them. 'I tank da man have nice place for

"Wait!" From another room she brought

"I shall not need it, Charlie, with you to guard me. Take them to the dug-"Yas, I tank da man not better shoot.

rifle and ammunition.

"Only to defend his life, Charlie," "Yas, dat good enough." It was dark when Charlie started off. but he knew the way. It could not be

totally dark with so much snow. He did not loiter. He was soon lost to Then Nellie flung herselg on the couch and the reaction came. She wept vio-

had not lost courage. She was only a The night was darker in Hubbicks than out on the prairies. There were trees there, and the snow was by this party, one portion of which was to lynch time blackened with the mud by the and the other portion to pretend to detramp of many horses.

lently, and sobbed and prayed. But she

The excitement of the murder had put law supporting citizens, who, under the everybody in motion. It was hard to sheriff, the legal authority, were out to find a clean drift near Hubbicks. Old Crooked Ears left the road and

crossed an unfenced field, which brought him to a grove of ash. Here he tethered Jenny, the mare, and continued his journey.

Mose, the halfbreed, was sitting in his

cupboard of a dwelling in one end of the lockup, smoking placifly and wondering when the men would come. ing that if anything happened that night it was worth his while to yield grace-

fully. It would cost him his life to resist. When he heard the crunch of a horse

outside he put down his pipe and stepped to the door. It was only Crooked

came out. Joe was his uncle, but family relations did not count much in the amenities of

that region. "No. Heard anything?"

"Yes. Gavin want the man hung up before the judge get back." "Gavin, eh!" said Mose with a start. "Gavin no like him because him like Hubbick little girl. Him think to kill the man before Gordon get back, because him no got proof that him killed Hubdick.

"Huh!"
"I no like Gavin. I like Gordon. like Hubbick girl. What you like?"
"I like to be let alone," said Mose. "What the devil are they doing, with their lynchings and deviltry? Gordon's

a judge. He'd see the right done." "Gavin no want the right done. Gavin like the wrong. Him want get this man killed so get Nellie Hubbick. See?"

"What you do now? I come to ge "Eh."

Mose stared at the Indian. 'What you do? You like be good with Gavin or me?" "Go to the devil! I'm good with any

"You want Gavin like you or me "Eh! That's different," said Mose

reaching for his revolver. But the iron hand of the Indian had im by the throat. "Don't make noise," hissed Crooked Ears, "I no hurt you. But I kill you

if you cry out." "Oh, shut up," said Mose in disgust. "I'm no friend of Gavin's. If you want the chap, let him out. But fix me up so I can tell a likely tale."

He handed his revolver to Joe "Shoot me in the arm, and then tie "Devil, no. The shot will

"Then tie me up good and chuck m under the table like I had a knock on Swiftly a rope was brought, and Joe's nimble fingers wound it around the in-

ert arms and legs of his willing pris-Gavin!" Joe took his relative and dragged him "The sheriff!" added Nelson quite suinto his room, where there was a fire perfluously. But he wanted to do his "Now I go," he said.

A curtain was drawn aside after Joe took it from the nail on which it Cayright was moodily waiting for something to turn up, when the Indian entered. Some light came in through the chinks between the logs, feeble rays from the lantern in the keeper's quar-

You free man. But hurry. Gavin come He knew the way to the dugout. But get you and hang you up.

"Hang me up! Are they going to lynch "Yes, before Gordon come back to

save you. Gavin want Nellie. Nellie "Can't you think of some way of getting from the house to the dugout with- want save you. She say tell him ride out tramping all the way through the my mare straight to me. She like you."

fresh snow?" she asked.

"Heaven bless the girl!" breathed Cay-

right. "Hurry! Gavin come now soon." "But I can't drag the girl into the

"Damn fool!" grunted Joe. "Do what Joe say. Nellie want you. Gavin catch you quick on prairie. Shoot you for breaking out. You go see Nellie. She

"God bless the little girl!" said Cay-"I've no right to do it, but she may have a plan. Where's the horse?" "Come! Follow me."

Cavright followed. An hour later a group of men gatherwant to hide the man there. Will you ed at a gin mill in the town. Gavin counted them, and saw they could all

"Mind, now, I'll meet you at the jall, with Nelson and Grimes, and shoot in the air. Don't shoot us. But get the With swift movements of precision, fellow out and string him up quick." "Don't waste time telling that again." grunted a half drunken fellow.

Gavin and Grimes sped around by an-Canned meats were placed in a basket, other route. The mob of "vigilants" went direct to the jail. "Ho, Mose!" shouted the leader as

know what to do. Come on."

Silence followed. The leader struck

"By God!" he shouted, so loud that now. Gavin heard him from his halting place 'Somebody's been before us. The keeper's killed. The bird is gone." Gavin's oath was heard above the hub-

bub. He sprang to the scene. amined the well-bound keeper. "Get up, here, if you are alive oared, with a fearful oath. who did this thing, or I'll carve you into food for crows. Stand up! Who If you find him, take him. et that devil free?"

Gavin's hands grasped the shoulders of the keeper and held him up. man's eyes did not open.
"Good God, Gavin!" cried Nelson.

'He is dead. Look.
Gavin let the burden fall, and recoiled few houses ever do see. with another oath. From a wound over the heart. yound that must have been instantly fatal, the blood of Mose spurted over the

CHAPTER IX.

Hard Beset.

sheriff's boots.

For a moment surprise held the crowd silent. Then over the face of Gavin there came an inscrutable smile. It was better than he thought. From a farce, a seemingly

fend a prisoner, the mob was now con-Miners had come and gone out again. solidated into a band of law abiding and where's the horse he rode?" overtake an escaped prisoner and double in the door of a shed and scanned the

What better luck could Gavin ask? In his former plans he had always to think of the danger of Judge Gordon's shrewdness in ferreting out an illegal act under the cloak of authority.

But now! It was his duty to find and

keeper of the lockup and made his own escape.
"We've got to get him!" shouted the Mose is still warm. Whose horse is prairie. If he is hiding we'll root him

out if every building in Hubbicks has to be torn down." Belts were tightened and revolver

looked to. This was different. To take an unarmed man from jail and hang him was who had committed three murders need-

ed caution. "Hinckney, you take a party of four out along the Bluff Mines route. Scatter little and cover the side trails. 'This fellow knows the country as well as we do. Look sharp and watch out for an her work. ambush. I'll go out to the farm."

In Gavin's mind a sentence spoken by the farm. A half dozen herders were Cayright at the time of his arrest stood out in different directions with their out distinctly. "I cannot say when I'll be back, but will be," Cayright had said to Nellie Gavin thought of the farm as a likely resting place for the fugitive.

not doubt that Nellie would shield him. So Gavin, Nelson, and Grimes rode away hurriedly in the direction of the all. tarm. It was nearly morning when they arrived, and the windows showed no; lights and no life was stirring.

'He must have got here two or three ours ago," said Nelson. all." said Grimes.

"He may have been and gone again, said Gavin. "I don't like to frighten want you to take the bay and hunt up Vellie, but we can't wait till she wakes." The tramp of the horses reached the ars of the girl, who was lying fully dressed on her bed. She was not asleep. Her heart had need you."

been beating rapidly for two hours past. She had been waiting with dread and lie. terror for the arrival of the pursuers. for she knew they would pursue, and Is there enough food to last three days she knew that Gavin would come to the house Charley Ox was snoring placidly. A half mile away, up the creek, Cay-

right was asleep in a dugout that could not know of its existence. It was the shelter Charley Ox had made for himself and the young lambs of his flocks in time of storm.

The warmth of sheep filled the pla now. But Cayright cared not for cold or heat. He was dreaming of Nellie.
"Ho, there!" came the voice of Gavin. "Nellie! Nellie Hubbick! It is

few minutes' waiting, and Nellie's white face looked out. "She's scared to death," said Grimes 'I'll bet a dollar she doesn't know the chap's escaped."

The white face disappeared from the window, and the door was opened. "What is it? What do you want?" asked Nellie.

The sleepy eyes of Charley Ox glowred ominously behind her.

"Let us in," said Gavin. "We won't eat you. That man has gone. "What man?" asked Nellie, clasping her hands.

"Oh, you know what man. chan you are so sweet on after he killed your father and mother. It may mak da track to da town. Da creek mess. Where's my horse? I'll strike off murder. He killed Mose, the halfbreed pathy for evildoers. keeper.'

"No, no! Impossible!" gasped Nellie, this time wringing her hands in real would go farther. "Yes," said Gavin. "We heard a

his ribs. We tracked the fellow this far. Where is he?" Gavin spoke roughly. Grimes thought he was making a mistake. But Gavin was the kind of a man who never be

lieved he could make mistakes.

Nellie looked from one to the other of the three. When Gavin had said of the three. they tracked Cayright to the farm she had seen a fleeting smile on Nelson's face. She took courage from that smile. 'Now, Sheriff Gavin," she said, speak ing as calmly as though she had asked simply for a glass of water, "please dis continue this abuse, and explain why you have disturbed me at this unrea sonable hour. I should have supposed that after all I had been through,

might receive some consideration. "Nellie," answered the sheriff, som they reached it. 'Come out and deliver what abashed by her caim, firm voice and manner, "I am simply doin' my duty. I'm sheriff of this county. When a crime's been done, it's my duty to get the criminal. That's all I am doing

"That fellow I arrested here for the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Hubbick has killed another man and escaped. It is my business to find him. If it is within your power to assist, it is your duty." "You accuse me of harboring him. The house is at your disposal. You are "Tell us at liberty to search it from one end to the other. Go to the barns and sheds. It was a convincing speech. It con-vinced Nelson and Grimes, but not

The Gavin. He knew more about Nellie's determined spirit than they did. "I accept the invitation," he said. Thereupon began a search such as that house had never seen before, and

> They uptnrned furniture. They ran-sacked closets. They pulled beds apart. They upset everything. But they did not find the fugitive. "He isn't in the house. Let's get a lantern and go to the buildings." They hunted with the lantern till the

lantern was no longer needed.

With what joy could he have throttled these men who were causing his mistress all this annoyance! "There's one thing we've forgot,"

Grimes. "If this chap is hiding here, he came on horseback. He couldn't do it on foot and get here ahead of us. Now, "That's so," said Nelson. horses belong here. His horse it at Hubbicks."

Not a piece of hewed timber showed above the ground except those in the buildings they had examined. "Well," he said, "if he isn't here now, he will be. We must work a game.

punish this man who had killed the "Well?" asked Nellie, who was preparing breakfast. "I must beg your pardon, Neilie," said the sheriff. "I may have seemed sheriff to his men. "He can't be far. ugly, but I did not mean to be. I believe now the man is not here. We must go and find him."

white, but she felt reassured. "Your work is exhausting," she said with just the slightest irony. "Will

think of it.'

mounted. "Good-by, Nellie. You'll forgive me, a fair and impartial trial. Meantime, you'r you?" asked Gavin. won't you?" asked Gavin.
"A man needs no forgiveness for

performing his duty," she answered They rode away. Nellie watched them for a while, and then went about

There was much to be thought of on

cattle. These must be communicated caused. Perhaps some of them had perished Ox off to hunt up the herders, and must in the snow. Charlie Ox was the only

one who had put in an appearance. Upon him she must depend to do it

"Charlie, have they gone quite out of sight?" she asked. "I tank so sometam. But I hear de tall man say a tang about da game I tank da came back. She shuddered. She knew that Gavin

was capable of any game that promised to serve his ends. "I must fight them alone, Charlie. Johnson, Bertney, and Zack. find Zack, tell him to look up the others, and then come to me their reports. You hurry back; I may

"I tak me two, tre day," said Char-"What you do?" "I'll get along. You can do nothing. in the dugout?'

"Yas, I tank do food las' a week." So Charlie went, and Nellie was left alone. But not for long. Glacing from her window, Judge Gordon riding from McCassatt. Her heart leaped for joy. Here was the square man-the brave man-the

ould look for help. She started rush to the door, ready to tell the whole story. She stopped suddenly, sick and faint Her hands went to her head. She almost reeled.

Here was the one man to whom she

"Heavens!" she murmured. "I cannot tell him!" When it was simply a question of sav ing a man she knew was innocent of the murder of Hubbick and his wife, and

who had been kind to her during the days they were locked up together by the snow, she had no doubt of Judge Gordon's course. But now!

Mose, the keeper, was dead! Cayright or Crooked Ears must have killed him! She could not speak to Gordon without betraying them. betraying them.

"What shall I do? What can I do?" | the next, what message should she moaned. And then, as she saw the send? judge riding up the lane to the house, and set.

story. He had met Gavin on the way. CHAPTER X.

A New Crisis. The judge was hale and hearty, and big and strong. He had a kind and please you to know he's done another generous nature, but absolutely no sym

For the unfortunate he would go any length

nal, especially a murderer or thief, was, in the eyes of this stern and upright umpus at the jail and went there. We found Mose dead with a knife stuck in judge, as bad as the criminal himself. The judge was right in his belief

> although the judge did not know it. "My dear little girl," he said, kindly is he entered, "what is this terrible story of misfortune I hear? Hubbick and his wife dead? Murdered, so Gavin

has been a sad house since I saw you "Sit down here, my little friend, and

and rehearsed the entire story, dwelling upon the kindness of Cayright while in

The judge frowned. so far as any one had ever known-en

"Both man and wife were killed. The murderer, finishing his work, discovered a baby asleep in a crib. some kind of pity, he took the boy, carried him with him in his escape from justice, and brought him up. Through his love for that baby he became a better man, filled honorable positions, and was only discovered by an accident. It

"And what happened?" asked Nellie, to whom this story seemed to appeal 'Was he arrested?'

"Yes, and hanged. The law does not recognize the lapse of time in murder cases, and the fact that he had lived a better life did not atone for his former trime. I simply tell you this to account for the kindness of your mur-Charlie Ox followed them about with itching

him at once, and rid the community of

"Well, well, we must not forget that

murder. The zest with which they would hunt him would prevent any efort to find the real murderer.

The lapse of time would enable the

over his tracks beyond fear of dis-To whom could she go? Cayright, she tnew, had powerful friends. But how

riminal to make good his escape, and

Even he, with his lack of manliness is selfishness, his propensity to beg. might help her. But he was in Helena, or some town near it. She could not get word to him unless

if Charlie Ox could find the way. But there was Joe, old Crooked Ears There was not a trail in Montana over which he could not find his way by day A swift, sure messenger, faithful unto

The next question was, how could she let Joe know she wanted him to start for Helena with a message? And then Ears on the floor.

This brother of hers was a he saw also that his face was white to Nellie. The story of their lives had He had already heard the been a sad one. And now Nellie's prom-

ised to be sadder still. Long years before, when Nellie was a wee infant, a settler's family had journeyed across the open country of north-

ern Minnesota. Robert Deckton and his wife were sturdy people; their two children, Spen-cer and Nellie, were pretty and strong.

Spencer was the elder of the two Disaster overtook the wayfarers. They somehow got off the lines of came lost. were overtaken by hunger,

and sickness resulted.

The wife died first, leaving a weak and distracted father with two children on his hands, and fever raging in his

He had camped on the banks of a stream that was broad enough for him to think it was the Mississippi. His plan had been, when they were strong enough, to go down the river on a raft till they reached a town, and there put up till they gained strength to continue But with the eye of fear for his two children, the father foresaw the day

ness, leaving them to be devoured by wolves. In stronger hours, he had partially constructed the raft on which they were to journey to safety.

when he should also die in the wilder-

This was now large enough to carry the children. Feeling that his end was near, the father managed to fasten the children securely to the raft, and then wrote, with weak and trembling fingers, an account of himself and the end of his journey. This was pinned to the jacket

of the boy. For two days the father kept them near him, feeding them what he but then his strength failed-he felt

near him, feeding them what he had, but then his strength failed—he felt the fires raging in his brain—he prayed for God's protection for his little oneshe cast them adrift—and, with the laugh of madness, following them down the river. Robert Deckton died.

The raft was picked up, the children saved, and placed in an orphans' home in St. Paul.

But there is, in the West, a constant demand for children—not infants. When Spencer was thirteen years of age he was sent to a farmer of Minnesota.

The wife of Hubbick, frugal and yet needing help, had managed to obtain it by having always a foundling of some years to assist her in the work. One of these had died. Another had married and had a farm of her own. And then came Nellie.

Nellie knew she had a brother, but knew nothing else concerning him till, one day after they had come to Montana, Spencer appeared, claimed her for his sister, told her the story of the raft as she had heard it in St. Paul, and she took him to her heart.

But Spencer was not the brother she had longed for—had pictured in her dreams. He proved to be lazy, avarictous, untruthful. Mr. Hubbick had sent him adrift.

He had written to Nellie repeatedly for money. She sent him a little out of her savings. He wrote again from Helena that he was going to the mines, and would return her loan with interest when he struck it rich.

Whether the strike had been delayed, or he had forgotten his debt, Nellie did not know. She had not heard from him since.

Mose Burton, the keeper. He must be a very desperate man. We must catch

dangerous a character."

He felt Nellie shudder under the buch of his hand.

"My dear girl," he said, "It cannot be ossible that you have learned to care or this desperado!"

"Oh!"

With that simple, heart-broken cryshe flung herself into the arms of the astonished judge.

"Nellie! Poor, poor girl!" he said soothingly.

"Oh, I have prayed for your return that you might help me!" she sobbed.
"I knew you were so strong and brave and upright. And now you have come, you have joined with my enemies. I you have joined with my enemies. I was no other, till Cayright himself was no other, till Cayright himself.

was looking, and she knew it. But there was no other, till Cayright himself could reach his friends, and set the mills in motion that would grind and separate the wheat of truth from the chaff of mystery, and free him forever from the stain of a criminal charge. "H'm! That brother-he has not been

brother? How should let old Crooked Ears know she wanted him to take it! The hours dragged along slowly and wearily. They seemed heavy with the

"Well, well, we must not forget that it is not Spencer with whom we are now concerned. He is miles away, working honestly, I hope, to earn a living. But we will not press this terrible matter now. Gavin is sure to find his man, and then we will give him a fair and impartial trial. Meantime, you must come home with me. This ioneliness will kill you. The strain will drive you mad."

"No, I cannot go, I will not enter working will kill you. The strain will drive you mad."

"No, I cannot go, I will not enter who will it can go without the charges of Sheriff Gavin following me. Give my love to Mrs. Gordon and Alice, rell them that I am still the same Nellie they once knew—and loved."

"And love now, poor child," he said, caressing her. "Come with me, I in sist."

"No, I cannot. I have sent Charlie Ox off to hunt up the herders, and must wait for a report."

"But I can manage all that, my dear. I can take all this work off your hands."

"No, I shall stay, judge. Do not press me."

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"No, I shall stay, judge. Judge. I shall stay judge. I shall stay judge. I shall stay judge. I shall stay judge

CHAPTER XI.

"I Will Tell Nothing." Hard and fast on the pony's traff ame Gavin and his men. But Gavin was no longer the leader.

Erect, stern, puzzled, but generously inclined, Judge Gordon rode ahead. Poor Nellie had not had time to plan ince the Indian died.

since the Indian died.

At first her impulse was to rush to the dugout and warn Cayright. But second thought showed her how futile an attempt to escape would be.

It was as impossible for him to outride his pursuers now as it had been when Joe set him free from the lockup. What ever danger she might be in herself did not appeal to her. Her only thought was for the safety of Cayright. And she knew he was safer in the unknown dugout than in the saddle. If she went to him she might betray his presence to Gavin. But if she did not go, her neglect might be the cause of his capture. Torn by the conflicting emotions, Nellie stood irresolure when house.

Gavin came a close second.
"Dead!" was the word the judge ut-tered when he saw the form of Crooked

To convict a criminal he One who did sympathize with a crimi-

ave too much maudlin sympathy for doers. But this was another case,

tells me. "Yes, judge," answered Nellie. "This

her to the sofa.

He sat down beside her and took her Nellie knew that he had already heard all from Gavin. But she nerved herself

tell me all about it," he said, leading

"I have known of just such cases," he said. "I knew of a case in Wyoming where a fellow-wicked, vile, merciless, tered a house at night for plunder. He was caught in the act of opening a bureau. The man of the house rose and tackled him. There was a fight, in which the mistress joined.

was a strange case."

"That it was not a permanent kindness is shown by the fact that he killed

"No: I looked upon him with con-Her face was still tempt. But now to whom shall I turn? Spencer is not a good man, but he is my brother." you not have a cup of coffee before you it is not Spencer with whom we are now concerned. He is miles away, "We will, Nellie. You are kind to working honestly, I hope, to earn a think of it."

They refreshed themselves and remounted the selves and remove the selves and remove

could she reach them? In her extremity she thought of her brother Spencer.

she sent Charlie Ox. It was doubtful

death, the Indian loomed now brighter and nobler than the men she knew. Compared to Gavin, he was a prince.